

000 /Chapter I-III, pp. 1-45, including Fig. 1 and Plates II and III, are omitted in the translation. /

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Chapter IV.

First Encounter with the Indians.

Bark canoes. Traces of Indians. My trip with Antonio and Carlos. Animal life. Reverie before supper. Mouth of the Ponekurú. Cataracts. Signs of colonization increase. Chief Tumayaua. To the first Bakairí village. Arrival of the "Karaiben."

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[824] After tapping several times in vain, Antonio found a jatobá (Hymenaea sp.) with serviceable bark. A pole scaffold is erected around the tree; a long rectangular strip of bark is loosened with ax blows and, carefully taken down, is placed on low supports; then the bark is made pliable with heat, a fire being lighted underneath and twigs also set a fire on top, and the edges of the longitudinal sides are bent upward. In front a point is formed; in the rear the bark is pushed forward toward the inside to produce a slightly hollowed out bulkhead with acute-angled edges, at which the bark is soon likely to split. The canoe was to be finished in a day and brought to the water the next morning.

000 Antonio came home from his work noticeably pleased. I believed it was because the canoe had turned out well, I talked to him about it for a while and then, referring once more to our plans, said: "So you are not afraid that the river is without inhabitants?" "No," he replied in dismissal, "I've already found a rancho." "Why didn't you say so?" "Well, I intended to."

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[412] In looking for wood for the oars, he had discovered a collapsed hunting-hut covered with palm straw; its posts showed the blunt gash-marks of a stone ax. Beside it lay charred logs still in the [354] radial arrangement of the Indian campfire; adjacent jatobás had been tested with stone axes for their usefulness, a still recognizable path led through the brush to a "harbor" on the river. Antonio thought it was probably a year ago that the visitors had stopped here.

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We therefore named our camping place, which we had taken possession of shortly after 4:00, Pouso do Jakaré. Antonio took charge of the unfortunate canoe; he shoved it onto a low framework of forked supports, lighted a fire of brush under it, and bent the front part up as much as possible; he stuffed the crack with rags and smeared it with beeswax. Howling monkeys gave us an evening concert and carried on as dreadfully as though we were supposed to learn how to shudder.

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We were glad to get up early the next morning; we cursed the mosquitoes and set out at 6:30 into the light mist floating over the water. The birds twittered and chirped noisily; a kaitetü pig was swimming across the river in the distance. We rowed as soundlessly as possible between the shores covered with campo vegetation: much tall leafy brush and bamboo thicket, out of which rose the tree of the red ants, the imbauva. A fat Mutum cavallo with black plumage shimmering greenish-blue and a sealing-wax red crest was successfully caught and immediately plucked; Antonio carefully collected the wing and tail feathers, which, split and turned spirally, are set on the end of the arrow shaft, for his fellows on the Paranatinga, so that he would have something to bring them from the journey. A small piece of the meat served as bait when we passed through some rapids with exposed boulders and disturbed the matrinchams, which allegedly sleep there between the stones. The two men threw out their lines and at each throw let them strike enticingly a couple of times; they were snapped at, but unfortunately there were no bites. They shot at a couple of playful ariranhas, large fish otters that surface like seals, spit, disappear quick as lightning, and suddenly appear again somewhere far downstream.

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Shortly after midday Antonio observed torn-off branches on the right bank; we disembarked and, on closer investigation, saw that a piece of slain game, probably a capybara, had been placed on a bed of twigs and leaves in order to protect the meat from sand while it was being eviscerated. There was neither hut nor evidence of fire; the booty had therefore been taken from this spot to the /Pl. IV appears here/ /49/ camping place or even to the village.

[Text Continues on p.6]

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*171 with a shaft and crook-handle (cf. the illustration /see Fig. 29,
501 p. 243/). Holding the crook-handle with one hand and the lower part of the shaft with the other, the Indian pushes the oar down rather vertically by his side and levers it forward with powerful pressure. Often the thrusts follow one another very rapidly, the oar is thrown high in the air and changes hands with lightning

[502] speed. One of the rowers usually sits in front, the other in the rear; the one in the rear steers with his paddle, the one in front shoots at fish. The only place to sit is a low clamped-in piece of

[415] branch. In the center lies a carrying basket, protected from the rain with leaves. Loam and resin play a great part; /235/ the

• [396] bark easily cracks, especially in the bent-in stern, and lets in water. Thanks to their great skill as pilots, the Bakaïrî shoot

*171 even through the swell of the cataracts without danger; the rapids
502 with a greater fall downstream in the region of the Yuruna, however, could not be surmounted with the low and fragile bark

canoes -- a noteworthy obstacle against the shifting of our tribes toward the north. Perhaps no less difficult would be the beating of the waves on the broader stream, which every strong wind

[396] brings. On the other hand, the bark canoes have the tremendous advantage of being made in the shortest time. For this reason even the people at the Fazenda S. Manoel were satisfied with a canoe furnished by the Bakaïrî, which cost only one day's work.

[482] They are easy to carry out of the forest to the shore; bast rings protect the shoulders.

*171 Fishing is done just as much as possible during a trip, and
484 similarly eating. Smoking and singing en route are unknown.

*171 Fishing implements. The shooting of fish with bow and arrow
226 provides only a little booty, in terms of number. I have reported on the fences or palings with which the river was blocked off near the second Bakaïrî village, on the "chiqueiras," the barrier made, with twigs that closes off the mouths of brooks or the arms of lagoons, on the stone circles that were laid out, often in great numbers, in the shallow river bed near rapids, and where the fish entered from above through a narrow opening and, driven downstream, were caught in nets at the opposite exit, and, finally,

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fat in order to stay warm. The Indians wanted the sun to come out, and so they donned their apparel, painted their bodies, and began to ask Orimoto, the great spirit. Orimoto was not an Indian but a man who lived in a stone house with some animals which he had created. The Indians went on asking until finally the light broke out; but the Indians had already grown old and the children had already grown up.

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The data at our disposal do not permit us to place in Bakairí cosmology beings such as Tchini-numa, Keri-kamé, or Orimoto and Nakoeri. Nevertheless, we prefer to regard Nakoeri as the supreme being of the Bakairí, leaving to Tchini-numa, Keri-kamé (the sun and the moon), and Orimoto the role of culture heroes, until new work clarifies their respective functions.

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Compelled to deal with a hostile environment, such as the savannas and forests of the headwaters of the Xingu, and lacking an adequate technology, the Bakairí, like the other Xinguano Indians, depended to a large extent on uncertain factors such as the amount of rainfall and the resulting annual increase of waters, which led to a scarcity or an abundance of food. Lacking an adequate technology, they did not store their produce but lived on a subsistence economy. Their hunting and fishing activities were followed by magic rituals with which they attempted to control the possibility of sudden future calamities or even of illnesses. Thus agricultural activities and the building of houses or canoes had to be followed by propitiations. In order to utilize the vegetal or animal raw materials, it was necessary to know how to control uncertain elements: How explain, for example, why one canoe splits and another does not, when both were made by the same craftsman? How explain how the same /270/ foods sometimes appeared harmless and sometimes made people ill? The system of beliefs of the Bakairí seems to us an interpretation that

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[P 90-B]

252 wooden benches, and dishes and cups made from
415 gourds.

484 As the Bacairi were extensive travelers and
226 depended upon fish for a considerable part of
501 their food supply, canoes were an important part
of their equipment. The Bacairi canoe (*pépi*)
● 396 was made from the bark of the jatobá tree. The
(824) tough, heavy bark was first stripped from one-
half of the tree. Small fires were then lighted on
the inside of the bark trough to make it curl.
Braces were placed at intervals along the entire
length, the bow was tapered, and the stern was
squared off by forcing the bark upward at one end.

501 Bacairi canoes varied in size, the larger ones being
able to carry as many as 8 men. Canoes of jatobá

bark are used by the Bacairi today and are the
[171] predominant type among the Indians of the
415 Upper Xingú. The Bacairi also made large

[824] tubs out of jatobá bark which were used as settling
252 vessels for manioc juice. The juice of the manioc

contains a fine powder or starch which settles on
the bottom of the vessel, to be gathered after the

241 liquid is poured off. For gardening, the Bacairi
formerly used a digging stick made of hardwood.

411 For hunting, they used a bow (*túka*), round or
(824) slightly oval in cross section and from 2 to 2½

meters in length, made from a yellow or reddish
wood which was first matured by burying it in
mud. The bowstring was made from the fibers of
imbauba bark. Arrows (*pirú*) were made from

[237] cane with hardwood or bone points. Hunting
arrows had two feathers, but arrows used for

412 shooting fish had serrated wooden points and no
feathers. The cutting tools of the Bacairi consisted

of knives made from bamboo, stone, bones, and
489 shell. Transportation was by canoe, or if over

482 land, goods were carried in a wicker basket sup-
ported on the back by a tump line.

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291 While living on the banks of the Kuliseu River,
[171] the Bacairi, in common with the other Upper
Xingú River tribes, did not use clothing. Men

sometimes wore a narrow cotton band (*onegín*)
around the waist, with a few tassels hanging in
front. Women, after puberty, wore the ulurí.

302 Men wore their hair cut short. Women wore their
hair long at the back but cut straight across over

[42] the forehead. Hair was cut with a knife made
[33] by setting sharp fish teeth into a wooden stick,

Bakaïri SP7
Mato Grosso SP1B
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Nine canoeemen, recommended by Major Noronha, were recruited from the Bakaïri. The nine included Paghuli, or Marcellino, and Apacanu, both of whom had lived on the Kulusen before the withdrawal of the Bakaïri to the post. Both of these men can speak Anahukua to some extent, and are the only men who know how to make bark canoes. Unfortunately, their Portuguese is poor, necessitating another interpreter. Their knowledge and skill in matters of river travel made them invaluable, however.

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The Bakaïri have the reputation of being the best canoeemen of the region. The children are taught to paddle from infancy, and become extremely skillful in paddling the clumsy and heavy canoes. The paddle used is short and narrow, and a quick, short stroke is employed, the paddler shifting his paddle from one side to the other with every two or three strokes. Steering is accomplished more by the bowman than by the man in the stern. The use of the stern paddle as a rudder is not well understood. Poling is resorted to by the man in the bow when going up the stream, in which case the efforts of the man in the stern are given to guiding the canoe, which is accomplished by quick shifting of the paddling from one side to the other. Among the Bakaïri, as indeed among all of the aborigines encountered, the women are as good paddlers as the men, but they never were seen poling.

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As soon as our personnel was completed, with the addition of a young Italian explorer, Giacomo Anzil, who had been forced to abandon his project to reach the Amazon upon reaching the post, our baggage was transferred to the backs of oxen and mules, which were to transport it to the Kulusen river. The men not concerned with driving the oxen went afoot. It was indeed an odd caravan. Mounted men busy with the oxen, men afoot carrying bows and arrows and guns, long-horned oxen, small mules, filed in a long line across the wastes of the plateau. All of the men wore a red kerchief wound about the head, and the usual bantering conversation was carried on. The Bakaïri, of course, wore trousers and shirts, and even sandals made of old automobile tires, in imitation of the Brazilian camaradas.

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As we moved eastward and slightly north, it became more often necessary to build bridges for the animals, across small but high-banked

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in the morning with the other oxen, with another extension on its life span. The extra men that had driven the oxen also returned to Simão Lopes, their fear of attack by the Kayapó hastening their journey back.

We were now totally out of touch with the world that we had left. The underbrush of a patch of jungle was cleared for our camp. This was always our practice, the insects and the moisture being less troublesome there than in the open. Furthermore we could swing our hammocks between trees, whereas it would have been necessary to set up hammock poles were we to camp in the open. As to danger of attack by the aborigines, it was felt that one is equally safe in the forest.

The following day the Bakairi began the search for suitable jatuba trees, for our canoes were to be made from the bark. The Bakairi set out early, without the customary breakfast, and carrying nothing but their weapons, without which they would not stir from camp. Were a man to eat before setting out to locate the trees he would never find one, they said. In case, by some fortuitous accident he did, the bark would be too thin, or too thick, or too dry, or would crack. Therefore nothing must be eaten until the trees are found. In the afternoon they returned with news that several had been located and also that a trail marked with broken twigs had been discovered running almost in a circle around our camp, indicating the presence of the Kayapó in the neighborhood. During the night it was claimed that strange calls were heard, but during our stay at this camp we were not molested.

For the comfort of the Brazilian camaradas I permitted the making of a dugout canoe; with this sort of watercraft they were familiar, but were distrustful of the bark canoes. Subsequently I had occasion to repent my decision and they their request.

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● 396 In four days the Bakairi made six canoes, two of which were of good size, each capable of carrying an estimated load of fifteen hundred pounds. The dugout was not completed until the seventh day, and it proved hardly serviceable then. Its only baggage was two cases of gasoline, and it gave infinite trouble to its men in the rapids because of its non-flexibility and great weight.

On the other hand, the jatuba bark canoe is flexible; this feature, combined with the thickness of the bark, diminishes the chances of perforation or capsizing on hitting a submerged rock or tree, which cannot be avoided, especially in the upper waters of the rivers. Such a

bark canoe suffers little or no damage where a dugout would either capsize or split. Canvas canoes would tear too easily. B
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When a jutuba tree suitable in size and condition of the bark is found, a platform of slender poles is built around it. Three upright poles are set up forming a triangle around the tree. Cross pieces in which the worker stands are lashed across from pole to pole. The outline of the canoe is then marked on the tree and is peeled off carefully by driving B
[40] in flexible wedges in between the bark and the wood.

The bark thus gotten is bent into the proper shape by building a smoldering fire on its inner surface and by means of poles used as levers on the sides, forming eventually a framework in which the canoe is wedged. The bending in of the sides too much is prevented by cross pieces. Sometimes the maker etches out a design on the outer bark.

The canoe thus obtained is a shallow affair and practically flat bottomed, which gives it stability. The bow is open and clay is used along the edges as a bank to keep out the water. The stern is raised somewhat but often water enters by it likewise.

The Bakairi, while making the canoes, fasted until the end of the day's work, when they ate pure food, in this case rice, farina and meat. It was explained that really they should have eaten nothing but piranha and biju, foods that we did not possess. Sexual abstinence is necessary, and were some women in the catamenial period to pass nearby, the bark would split. After work is begun no one, in fact, must approach, and if he, unaware that a canoe is being made, does come near, he must not leave on any account. B
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- Though we found other signs of the presence of aborigines in the neighborhood we never saw them; but that we were being watched carefully, there was no doubt. 000

With overloaded canoes we finally embarked on the next lap of our journey to the mouth of the Kuluseu river. For another seven days we worked in the rapids, fatiguing and morale-destroying work. Often we had to cut our way through fallen trees; for long distances canoes were dragged over dangerous stretches; many times the canoes had to be unloaded and the luggage portaged. The men worked naked in the water, and it remains a marvel how we came past the rapids without having suffered some serious injury and without having lost either canoes or baggage. However, the work in the water told on the men